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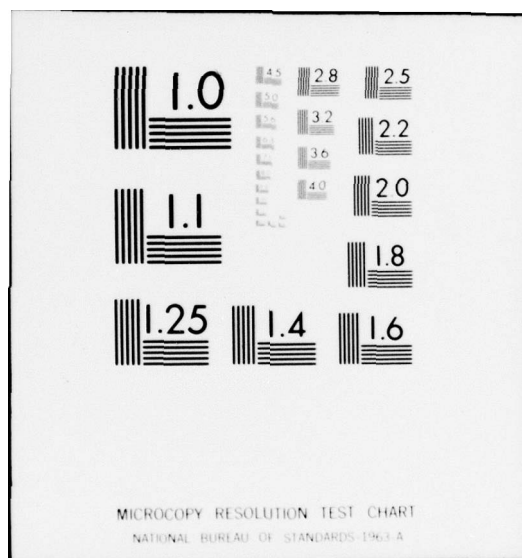UNCLASSIFIED   NL

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DEFENSE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT COLLEGE

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT COURSE

INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROGRAM

INTERPERSONAL STRATEGIES IN TRANSITION

Study Project Report
PMC 76-2

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FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA 22060

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DEFENSE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT COLLEGE

STUDY TITLE: INTERPERSONAL STRATEGIES IN TRANSITION

STUDY PROJECT GOALS: To identify the vertical and horizontal personal rela-
tionships of Army unit commanders and Army officers in project management offices.
To describe the transition required in interpersonal strategies to successfully
move from the environment of Command to that of the project management office.

STUDY REPORT ABSTRACT:
The purpose of the study is to examine the transition in interpersonal strategies
and relationship that occurs as an Army officer moves from the environment of
operational troop command to that of the project management office and provide
comment on the nature of the transition in general. The human behavioral
scientists listed in the bibliography were read for basic knowledge prior to
conducting unstructured   interviews with PMC 76-2 Army officers of the combat
arms.

The environmental factors of personality, subordinates, superiors, job demands,
and organization were examined to see how they impacted on interpersonal strate-
gies of both troop unit and project office. The influence of peers and associates
as co-workers were examined in light of horizontal interpersonal relationships.
The results of this examination were used to compare the two environments and
arrive at conclusions regarding the transition.

The significant conclusions were that the officers would most likely transition
from an authoritarian leaning leadership to one less so and more democratic
in that subordinates would be more involved in decision making. In addition, the
officer would be required, due to a loss of position power, to rely on authority
derived from personnel power developed by human skills and technical expertise.

The transition is significant and it is extremely important for the individual
to be aware of the changes in the environment so he can adapt his interpersonal
relationships to meet his particular situation.

DESCRIPTORS: Interpersonal Strategies
              Transition to the Project Office
              Human Relations

NAME, RANK, SERVICE	CLASS	DATE
JAMES K. COOKSEY, MAJOR, US ARMY	PMC 76-2	1 NOV 76

INTERPERSONAL STRATEGIES IN TRANSITION

Study Project Report

Individual Study Program

Defense Systems Management College

Program Management Course

Class 76-2

by

James Kenneth Cooksey
MAJ   USA

November 1976

Study Project Advisor
Mr. Bill Gicking

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently the Army is giving considerable attention to the overall
improvement of its management of weapon system acquisition. An impor-
tant part of this effort is to increase the numbers of those officers
in the project management career development program. Such as expan-
sion will mean an increase in the number of combat arms officers in
the career field. These combat arms officers moving from the environ-
ment of operational troop command to that of the project office will
make by necessity a number of transitions. This study examines the
transition required in the area interpersonal strategies and relation-
ships.

Interviews with PMC 76-2 students indicate that the transition for
any individual will differ markedly based on his own particular situa-
tion and perception of it. However, some general observations can be made.

As the combat arms officer moves from command he loses the position power
he enjoyed due to his title of commander and finds himself in a project
office where most of his duties require him to gain the support and
cooperation of those over whom he has no formal authority. He must
develop an informal authority based on his personal power which comes
from skill in dealing with people and technical expertise.

Examination of the environmental factors of the operational unit and
project office showed that the former tended to push the troop commander
toward an authoritarian leadership which permitted at best restricted

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participation by subordinates in planning and decision making. On the other hand, the project office environment encourages a free flow of information both vertically and horizontally and promotes greater participativeness on the part of all members.

Overall, the study shows that a real transition will be required. If the combat leader fails to recognize the need for change, he will have great difficulty.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

As the Army has continued to place additional emphasis on improving the
overall effectiveness of its material acquisition effort, it has con-
currently upgraded and significantly expanded its project management
career development program. This increase in the number of Army
project managers means that, at least initially, there will be more
combat arms officers with predominantly operational and troop oriented
backgrounds joining the ranks of the project managers. This is in con-
trast to the past when the majority of officers working in project
management offices were combat service support officers whose background
while not entirely comparable to the project management office environ-
ment was in fact similar in many respects and especially in the area of
interpersonal relationships and strategies.

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of the transition in
interpersonal relationships and strategies that an Army officer of the
combat arms will make as he moves from the environment of command of
operational troops to that of the project office. In order to fulfill
this study goal, it is necessary first to identify and try to understand
the interpersonal strategies peculiar to each environment. Once the
identity process has been completed, the interpersonal strategies of
each environment could be compared and conclusions drawn regarding the
type and degree of transition required to move from the first environment
to the second with success.

To accomplish the purpose of the study it was necessary to develop a basic knowledge of management techniques and behavioral science concepts. The bibliography lists the authors which were read to provide this basic knowledge. Care was exercised in the selection of the background material for time limitations required all such reading be pertinent to the study. For this reason, the authors are in every case recognized authorities in their fields. In fact, each is a universally noted contributor of at least one major thesis or tenent in management or behavioral science. Additionally, the VISM curriculum of the Defense Systems Management College provided a wealth of knowledge which had direct application to the study effort.

To obtain information on and insights into the interpersonal strategies of Army offices in the environments described earlier, unstructured interviews were conducted with Army officers of PMC 76-2 who had experienced one or both of the environments and in two cases the actual transition from command to project office. Each interview was indeed unique in that the officer perceived the environment in which he had operated based on his own particular situation, subordinates, and superiors. This produced a wide range of observations and opinions concerning the operative interpersonal strategies in each environment and the resulting transition that was made or would be required to be made. Thus, the result of the study will not be a set of specific, clearly definable interpersonal strategies present in each environment and a comparison of the studies to

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produce a neat transition process required to move from one to the other. Instead, a number of interpersonal strategies and relationships that may or may not exist in each environment will be examined to provide some general but useful observations on the nature of the transition, realizing that the transition required will be dependent on a great number of variables in each environment and these will most likely never be the same in any particular situation.

SECTION II

INTERPERSONAL STRATEGIES AND RELATIONSHIPS OF ARMY UNIT COMMANDERS

The overall interpersonal strategy of Army officers in command of troops
is reflected by the type leadership demonstrated in accomplishing the
operational mission and in maintaining the morale and welfare of the com-
mand. Sometimes these two tasks; that is, mission and unit morale and
welfare, may be in conflict. There are as many definitions of leader-
ship as there are authors on the subject. A simple definition for the
purpose here is: the series of actions taken by the commander to moti-
vate individuals in the unit to strive for unit mission accomplishment.
The term "type leadership" is used to indicate the degree to which the
commander allows his subordinates to participate in the decisions and
planning processes required for mission performance. The type leader-
ship employed exists on a continuum ranging from authoritarian on one
end to participative on the other. On one extreme the commander gives
orders or assigns tasks arrived at independently as opposed to the subordinates
playing a major role in planning and decision making at the other extreme.

The type leadership used by the commander is highly dependent on the
environment in which he operates. The troop commander himself, his
troops, his superiors, job demands and the organization are the primary
elements that make up the environment. (3:106) An examination of each
of these environmental components will show how they tend to place the
type leadership on the continuum.

The nature and psychological make-up of the commander himself has tremendous impact. His attitude toward people in general and in particular to his subordinates is paramount. The subscription to either Theory "X" or Theory "Y" described by McGregor gives the commander a view of his subordinates on one hand as innately lazy, irresponsible, and needing constant close supervision, or on the other hand as having a natural desire to be productive, self actualizing, and needing only moderate motivation to be totally responsible (6:33) (6:45) A commander with Theory "X" inclinations would tend to be authoritarian while one with Theory "Y" leanings would be more inclined to encourage subordinate participativeness. The manner in which authority is derived is of real consequence. The commander's authority may be based solely on his position or his personal attributes which include job ability, knowledge, and interpersonal skills. Most often the source is both position and personal. Over-dependence on position power would cause a gravitation toward authoritarianism. (3:92)

Another important facet of the troop commander's make-up is his attitude toward the task to be performed and the relations he has with his subordinates. (3:80) If he places high priority on task accomplishment and little on subordinate relationships he moves toward authoritarianism. However, he may well have both high task and high relationship traits which would move his leadership type more toward the participative area. A commander could also view his relationships with subordinates as more important than task accomplishment. This might well contribute to a lack of direction

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and instead of creating greater subordinate participation, actually
decrease it. This brief glimpse of traits shows the basic make-up
of the commander as central in arriving at a leadership style.

The subordinates also have an important effect on leadership type.
Mature, technically qualified, independent subordinates would naturally
tend to seek and be given a more participative role than immature,
inexperienced and dependent ones. Most operational units display a
shortage of maturity and experience. In most cases the immediate subor-
dinates of the commander are fresh from the training environment and
immature in that in many cases, this is their first job experience.
Subordinates with strongly independent and highly innovative traits,
even though relatively junior in rank, quickly begin to have participa-
tive functions.

A critical environmental factor is the action of the superior as it
impacts on the troop commanders leadership type. If the superior is
strongly authoritarian, manages by close supervision, and demands strict
compliance to detailed procedures provided by his staff for every contin-
gency then the opportunity for his subordinate commanders to employ
participative methods in their units is stifled. Likewise, if the
superior is more highly task oriented than relationship oriented, it
will cause the subordinate commander to increase his task orientation.
However, it does not necessarily mean that the subordinate commander need
reduce his effort in the area of relationships. In fact, to produce a
more effective unit, it would probably be most beneficial to increase

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relationship orientation in direct proportion to imposed task orientation emphasis.

The demands of the job are an important environmental consideration. Tasks requiring quick, positive action or response do not lend themselves to participative methods. There will also be situations where expertise is very limited and participative perogative is foregone by those who feel themselves unqualified to make knowledgeable judgements. This will in some cases be the commander who finds himself unqualified in a certain area of technical competence. Thus, he may be forced to more participative management techniques. Units performing highly structured or repetitive functions do not lend themselves to the degree of participativeness as those units which have a variety of missions which require great innovation for accomplishment. (7:162) (2:224)

The organization imparts much to the type leadership used within it. Highly structured, bureaucratic organizations do not provide participative functions, but divide each task into components that are handled independently with little interaction between responsible parties or elements. In addition, the image of the manager put forth in organizational literature, publications, or formal training sets a general pattern for the amount of subordinate participation that is expected.

For the most part, the Army operational organization emphasis is on the vertical structure and concentrates on how the leader functions in the vertical structure down to the very lowest level. Paralleling this,

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Army schools have traditionally painted the picture of the strong authoritarian leader making each critical decision on his own and have provided little knowledge in the area of behavioral science and its affect on management concepts.

Examination of the environment as a whole indicates that commanders of operational troop units tend to be inclined in their leadership type to occupy an area on the continuum from the mid-point which would indicate some moderate participativeness to the extreme of authoritarianism. The environmental factors of the superior, organization, and job demands are of such a nature as to discourage highly participative actions taking place at the unit level.

Up to this point the relationship examined have been vertical in nature and depict the superior-subordinate relationship in which the commander operates in either role. It is also appropriate to look at the horizontal relationships that exist. Primarily, these are with his peers or other commanders in his organization and staff or functional elements. In his relationships with other commanders in the organization, there can be an atmosphere of competition present or one of cooperation which would somewhat lessen the competitive atmosphere. In most cases, the competitive atmosphere is enhanced and in some cases exploited by the superior in an attempt to achieve greater performance. This particular horizontal relationship is often one of competition and leads to an attempt to constantly out-achieve or out-innovate his peers. This often prevents or minimizes a satisfactory peer relationship from developing.

When dealing with staff or support personnel, the commander finds himself with no formal or position authority by which to gain the cooperation he needs to accomplish a particular task. Here he is forced to develop an interpersonal relationship that will foster an atmosphere in which he and the staff member or support agent can work together on his problem. This is the situation in which he must depend on his human skills to create in that other person a desire to assist him. A particular situation may require the assistance of several agents in which case he would be building a team to accomplish a particular task. This function of horizontal interpersonal relationships is the most difficult task for him to perform and has great impact on the success of his units mission. If he spends most of his time closely supervising his subordinates and planning every detail of his unit's activity himself, he will not be able to spend the time required to most effectively conduct the horizontal interpersonal activities required to secure the support and assistance vital to the unit's mission accomplishment.

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SECTION III

INTERPERSONAL STRATEGIES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PROJECT OFFICE

To determine the nature of the interpersonal strategies and relationships of the Army officer in the project management office, it will first be necessary, just as in the case of the operational troop unit, to examine the environment. Some basic assumptions as to the role of the Army officer in the project office also are required. The primary assumption is that the officer will be a member of a project management office and while he may be responsible for some part of a major program which qualifies as responsibility for project management, he will not have the functional heads of a large program organization at his disposal or in a subordinate relationship. This seems reasonable for it would be rare for a total newcomer to program management to be given total responsibility for a major program with no prior experience whatsoever.

The environment in which the Army officer will be operating in the project office will be examined in light of the same general components as was the case for the commander of troops. These were the officer himself, his subordinates, his superiors, job demands, and organization. One additional component will be added - co-workers.

The basic make-up of the officer himself will, of course, greatly influence his approach to interpersonal strategies used in the project office. Just as in Chapter II, his adoption of a Theory "X" or Theory "Y" philosophy in the interpersonal arena will be basic to any strategy development. In the project office, he will probably have numerically few subordinates so

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his position-derived authority will be minimal, thus requiring him to maximize the authority he gains from his personality, knowledge, and expertise.   Here, too, the priority he attaches to task accomplishment in relation to interpersonal relationships will influence his ability to get his job done.   A high task orientation may produce good results in the short run, but continued neglect of relationships with others in the office will produce long-term problems in the areas of response and cooperation.

The subordinates of the officer in the project office will in most cases be well educated, in fact in many cases better than himself in technical areas.   They will generally be mature individuals who have progressed to their current position by superior performance and a strong self-actualization drive.   People of this type are naturally independent and expect to participate in organization planning and goal selection.

The superior in the project office influences interpersonal strategies by the degree and kind of control he exercises.   He can require the office to function in a very structured, bureaucratic manner, or encourage maximum cooperation and coordination between the functional elements of office by deemphasizing the formal functional lines of authority and responsibility. These represent extremes and actual practice will vary due to the size, organization, and timing in the establishment of the project office in relation to the phase of development of the systems being managed.

The job demands of the project office just as in the case of the operational unit will determine in many situations, the degree of participation that

will be present. The need for rapid action here too negates the desirability for
for participative action. In a small project organization, an extremely
technical problem might cause most members to withdraw from participative
action due to a lack of a particualr technical competence.

The nature of the organizational structure of the project office contributes
to an atmosphere of participation. This is caused in great part by the
lack of all the functional elements required to do their job internally
and the resultant need for each member to work with external organizations.
The need for cooperative effort with external organizations creates an at-
mosphere that is conducive to more participation within the project office.

The co-worker relationship is an element of the project office environment
which has been added to the list of environmental components considered in
Chapter II. The co-worker relationship is critical to the effectiveness
of the project office. Here again, we find mature, highly educated and
technically qualified personnel who are accustomed to working as members
of project teams and who expect to participate in all actions which impact
on their areas of responsibility of expertise. The interpersonal strategy
here is one that will motivate the co-worker to enthusiastically participate
as team members in the areas where the Army officer must have their
technical expertise. It is here that the Army officer must act as the
"linking-pin" described by Likert (5:113) If he lacks the technical know-
ledge to do so he must ensure that this coordination role is effectively
discharged.

The area of interpersonal relationships with external organizations assumes

tremendous importance in accomplishing the mission of the project office.

Every task within the office is affected by the interaction of a number of

external elements which can include the contractor, higher headquarters,

test organizations, contract support, and users to name only a few of the

prominent ones. The desired interpersonal strategy here is one that will

permit the formation of effective teams which can operate across organiza-

tional boundries. Here the "linking-pin" must be even more effective

and adept than in the case of internal teams. The spirit of cooperation

and coordinative effort required fosters participation action by the

representatives of each organization.

SECTION IV

COMPARISON

To develop a comparison of the interpersonal strategies and relationships that exist in the operational unit and the project office, it is necessary to compare the environment influences and, in some cases, dictates the behavior of managers and members of the organization.

The make-up of the individual officer will have a considerable influence on his leadership or management style. The officer in the troop unit in most cases, will have spent all of his career to that point in operational units and his education in service schools will have been oriented toward authoritarian leadership. In most cases then the attitude of the officer in the troop unit would tend toward authoritarianism. In contrast, the officer going to the project office has in most cases, completed Command and General Staff College and, now in increasing numbers, Defense Systems Management College. The curriculum of both include substantial incite in the area of behavioral science and training in small group dynamics. Additionally, most officers going to project offices have completed advanced degree requirements at civilian institutions; thus they have "rubbed-elbows" with the professionals they will be closely associated with in the project office. It appears then that the officer going to the project office will in most cases, at least be aware of the differences that exist and will see a need for a change in his interpersonal strategies and relationships if he has employed an authoritarian leadership type in his previous role as a commander.

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A sharp contrast is seen in the difference between the subordinates involved. The subordinates in the operational unit are in most cases numerous, immature, technically trained but inexperienced, unproven, and lacking in confidence. To change this situation, the commander would need to institute a major improvement program which if within his capability would be extremely difficult due to high personnel turnover. So he compromises and allows those few who seem ready to assume a participative role, and he controls the remainder with goals and objectives he sets and checks himself. Conversely, the generally more mature, better educated, and self-actualizing members of the project office seek and can be given greater participative roles, in most cases.

Generally, the superior in each situation has as a minimum, been exposed to behavioral science concepts. But in most operational units close supervision is maintained to insure compliance to strict SOPs established by the superior and policed by his staff. In addition, a high degree of competitiveness is encouraged among subordinate units which results in a decrease in the flow of ideas and information between the units competing. The superior of the unit commander limits the amount of participation in the overall organization, thus also the amount his subordinate may allow in his own unit. The superior in the project office is normally a program manager who has been selected for his post by virtue of his success as a member of another project office or as the manager of a less complex project. He, therefore, is knowledgeable of the environment and the need for a participative attitude in the office that creates the flow of ideas and cooperative spirit necessary to get the job done. Normally, it is expected

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that the superior in the project office will encourage maximum participativeness appropriate to the situation.

In the examination of the effects of the organization in Chapters II and III, it was brought out that the organizational structure of the operational unit contributed to an atmosphere that discouraged participation. On the other hand, that of the project office created an atmosphere conducive to participation of all in the office.

Comparison of job demands shown significant differences. In the operational unit, most measures of the unit's success or failure are based on its ability to accomplish tasks which can for the most part be accomplished internally with minimal external support. In contrast to this, the effectiveness of the project office is almost entirely measured by the results achieved in accomplishing tasks requiring considerable coordination and support from one or several external sources. The need for rapid response causes a reduction of participation and consultation in both situations but the number of "short fuse" actions faced is generally greater in the operational unit due to reduced planning capability found at that level and the number of headquarters above it which can arbitraily make changes or establish deadline which require immediate action. In most cases, job demands favor greater participative action in the project office.

The horizontal interpersonal relationships of the officer in the operational unit differs markedly from those of the officer in the project office. Peer relationships for the troop commander are often highly competitive. Those of the office in the project office differ in that his peers are members of project subelements or speciality groups with whom he must

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work closely to get his job done. It was pointed out earlier that if the unit commander could spend less time in a supervisory and detail planning role, his time could be spent in coordinating support required to increase the overall unit effectiveness. In the case of the officer in the project office if he closely supervises subordinates and closely maintains the actions of members of project teams formed to assist him, he will probably not have enough time to adequately do his job. In addition, Theory "X" applied here may well give satisfactory short term results but produce total failure over the term of the project.

SECTION V

CONCLUSIONS

The intent of this study is to provide information on the nature of the transition that the Army officer will make as he moves from operational unit command to an assignment in a project management office. By comparing the environments of the two assignments, the areas of difference were highlighted. It is in the area of difference that the office will make transitions in interpersonal strategies and relationships.

In relationships involving subordinates, the Army Officer will be able to involve his subordinates in the project office in more planning and goal setting functions than he was in his command, due to the greater maturity, expertise, and expectancy of greater participation that the project office subordinates possess. Along these same lines he will find himself shifting much of his effort previously spent in direct supervision to efforts directed toward effectively performing those functions required of him as the "linking pin" for his particular part of the project organization.

He will find it necessary to develop his skills in human relations. As a result of the need for most tasks to be coordinated through or performed by external organizations or internal elements not under his control, there is a tremendous decrease in the authority derived from position and a quantum jump in the authority required to be derived from expertise and personality as it relates to human skills.

Overall, the environment in the project office is one which will be more participative in nature. This means that not only will his subordinates

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expect to have a voice in making decisions as to the direction of
their efforts, but also that they will in most cases, participate in
establishing directions for the project office. He should be prepared
to operate in this environment.

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